

STATE SENATOR • GRETCHEN WHITMER • 23RD DISTRICT

# Whitmer Press Release

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## DEMOCRATS INTRODUCE ETHICS PACKAGE

*Legislation improves disclosure and increases safeguards*

LANSING—Senate and House Democrats today unveiled legislation that will help make sure that the interests of Michigan citizens remain elected officials' top priority. The Democratic Ethics Reform Package is aimed at increasing disclosure to ensure that voters have access to accurate, honest information to hold their public servants accountable.

“This legislation does a great deal to level the playing field for businesses by increasing disclosure and ensuring that everyone gets a fair shot at state contracts,” said Sen. Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing). “Citizens will benefit from increased disclosure and access, and businesses will welcome the added safeguards in the state contracting process.”

Michigan Democrats have been working on ethics legislation for months, and recent problems with Republicans throughout the country have increased public desire for access to information. Michigan is one of only three states that require no public disclosure of financial interests by elected officials.

“Michigan citizens deserve to know where their elected officials are making their money,” said Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. “This legislation will ensure that elected officials are truly serving the people of Michigan, not themselves or special interests.”

Details of the Democratic Ethics Reform package include:

- Requiring the annual disclosure of financial interests by elected officials and candidates to protect against conflicts of interest;
- Creating a new Ethics Act for executive branch officials and employees and legislators to extend comprehensive ethics standards and conflict of interest regulations, including contracting and gift restrictions;
- Establishing a bipartisan legislative ethics committee to enforce the new laws;
- Enhancing the powers of the State Board of Ethics to ensure compliance with ethics laws, requiring referral of alleged illegal activities to appropriate law enforcement authorities;

- Prohibiting state contract managers from acting on any contract matter when the manager has a conflict of interest, and prohibits contract managers from soliciting or accepting campaign contributions, and prohibits contract managers from negotiating for employment offers with state vendors to ensure integrity in state contracting process.
- Extending the current ban on speaking fees for legislators to all elected state officials;
- Banning soliciting, delivering, or accepting political contributions in a state or local government facility where government business is conducted.

Democrats have also called for action on legislation that would close the lobbyist revolving door by establishing a one-year ban for elected state officials and non-elected heads of principal government departments and full disclosure of recorded telephone calls in elections, including whom paid for and authorized the call. Legislation on these two issues is already pending.

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